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ART AND PROGRESS

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THE ART OF OUR TIME

Faith is essential to progress. One who did not believe in himself, the reasonableness of his effort, and in others, would never take a single forward step. On this account it seems eminently worth while to record in these columns, at this time, when a new art season is opening, the optimistic utterances of one of our contemporary writers, as well as certain facts which have come under our own observation.

After describing briefly the conditions under which art found expression in the Gothic Period in Europe, Miss E. L. Cary, the art critic of the *New York Times*, says, in an article published in

that paper on September 29th: "Probably a Greek of pessimistic tendency would have found little to encourage him in the European art of the tenth or eleventh century; * * * from his point of view art was dead, but the critic of to-day, looking back can see the birth of an equally important art impulse in the Gothic period, expressing a different civilization and new tendencies in human progress.

"It requires little courage to predict a similar awakening for our own people and an appropriate expression of our own Zeitgeist in a new art form. * * * The way in America is being cleared for it with a rapidity and thoroughness that can find no parallel in history. The evolution of taste on the part of American collectors is a matter of wonder in all parts of Europe. * * * On the other side we are constructing vast buildings in the west and east and north and south which await their decorators. Our architects are confronting problems fixed by exigencies of commerce and industry and other problems arising from the desire of our rich people to live in beautiful surroundings. The physical demands of the country are also making their impression on its art. When Mr. Pennell visited the lock at Pedro Miguel he asked the engineer in astonishment how he had come to make the splendid springing lines of his arches and buttresses as fine as those of a cathedral, and the reply came that it was done to save concrete. These are the engineering problems that inspire the artist of to-day, and our bridges and sky-scrapers will have for their future historian as close association with the beginnings of our new American art as the cathedrals have with the beginnings of Gothic art."

Miss Cary adds that "no one sees more clearly than the reporter of art movements the dull side of modern art," but she declares also, "that no one who has watched with open mind for the signs of progress has failed to perceive them."

All this is very true; our architects are grappling with gigantic problems, our painters are finding more and more

frank and sincere self expression, our sculptors are producing work which now and then savors of universal truth, our illustrators are pictorially recording contemporary life and in no mean way. But what is more, the people of our land are turning their attention more generally to art, being led through curiosity to interest and appreciation. The demand for exhibitions of art throughout the country has become enormous. The American Federation of Arts is planning to send out this winter on separate circuits no less than eighteen exhibitions, all of which will uphold a high standard, and even these, going in some instances to six or eight cities each, do not satisfy the demand. Much is being done by the public schools toward awakening interest and cultivating appreciation. It is a gradual evolution and an unconscious development.

There are those among us who cry out that there is no art in our land, but as Arnold Bennett says in his article in the October number of the *Harper's Magazine*, they have not looked in the right quarters for vital art—those quarters where it has been brought forth by popular demand, for example, the architecture of our railway stations and the draftsmanship and sketch-writing of newspapers and magazines.

Compare the conditions fifty years ago with those to-day. Where, then, were our palatial railroad stations, our State and City Art Commissions, our art schools? What, then, was our sculpture, our domestic architecture? Or how did our public and private collections of art stand with those of to-day? In the book reviews in this number of ART AND PROGRESS will be found mention of a little illustrated guide book to the art in public collections in New York and Boston, published in Leipzig, in German, for the benefit of German travelers in the United States. Fifty years ago such a publication would have been an absurdity, to-day it is not only logical, but will command respect. That despite all our blunders and discouragements we are making progress there can surely be no doubt.

NOTES

A NOTABLE EXHIBITION OF TEXTILES

From the last week in November through the month of December a notable collection of Ancient Textiles will be exhibited in the Albright Gallery, Buffalo. The loan of this collection was secured in Paris by Miss Cornelia B. Sage, Director of the Albright Gallery, during a recent visit to that city. It was her privilege at that time to see many of the greatest collections in the French capital, among them that of Messrs. Bacri, well known and distinguished critics and collectors. This collection comprises many fine and rare specimens of ancient fabrics and stuffs which are considered now almost priceless. Indeed, both for the great Munich Exhibit of 1910 and for the Exhibitions of Les Arts Decoratifs, Paris, it was largely drawn upon. It is this collection which Miss Sage succeeded in borrowing and it is an unusual opportunity that will thus be afforded art lovers in America.

This great and comprehensive collection dates from the first years of the Christian era to the eighteenth century; it includes some rare Coptic specimens, Persian stuffs, Arabian, Italian, Byzantine, Spanish, Hispano-Arabian, German, Swiss, French, English and other countries. There are Priest's vestments, chasubles, orphreys, copes, bits of stuffs of rugs and velvets, altar cloths and draperies.

Such an exhibition of ornamental textiles sheds a new light upon the development of certain artistic fabrics and illustrates the survivals and modifications of older ornament. The specimens are of peculiar value to the work of a museum and for the study of art lovers. The collection should be universal in its appeal.

A review of this exhibition with numerous illustrations, secured through the courtesy of Miss Sage and the owners, will be published in the December number of ART AND PROGRESS.